



COTTONWOOD
tucson

March 2011

Alumni News...

the journey continues

H. A. L. T.

If you have been in recovery for very long you have probably heard the acronym HALT. Most people use it to remind themselves or others not to get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired. Good advice for addicts, alcoholics, and depressives, trying to live in a world where food addiction, road rage, divorce and workaholism are everywhere we look. When we are stressed it is helpful to take an inner inventory to find out what's bugging us so that we don't have to act out in one of our many coping mechanisms.

Being a food addict, it never occurred to me that people might forget to eat and let Hunger rule their lives. When our blood sugar drops or when our bodies are screaming for nourishment it is common sense that we can't be functioning at our level best. This is when bad decisions can be made that we regret later.

Anger speaks for itself. We simply do not make rational decisions when we are angry. We often lash out regretting our actions later. Remorse and morbid reflection may become our constant companion.

It's sad to say but Loneliness can even be experienced in a crowded room. Sometime that is where we can feel the loneliest. No one reaches out a hand, no one speaks a word of encouragement. Feeling isolated and alone we are unable to take action to benefit ourselves.

Tired for me is stronger than all of the other emotions. I often don't know how to take care of myself when I'm tired, so in the past I've reverted to overeating, self-seeking, and/or isolating. All these negative behaviors are incorporated in Hungry, Angry and Lonely and Tired.

Thinking HALT is a great way to take a small personal inventory just to make sure your emotional well-being is healing along with the physical and spiritual components of your recovery. They all work together to ensure a peaceful and satisfying way of life.

If you have any questions, please contact me at shicks@cottonwoodtucson.com or call 520-743-0411 extension 2517.

Be well, Sally

Does the Noise in My Head Bother You? By Rokelle Lerner

Years ago I saw a film called *The Gods Must be Crazy*. There was a scene at a bar where one gentleman on a bar stool turns to the woman next to him and says, "Excuse me, does the noise in my head bother you?" For many of us, the clamor in our brains feels so out of control that this comment is not as absurd as one might think.

There isn't a person who comes through InnerPath that doesn't complain about the internal dialogue in their brains that dampens their spirit and contaminates their joy. For those of you who aren't sure what I'm referring to, let me clearly state that I'm not talking about schizophrenia. I'm talking about the barrage of self-deprecating messages and insults that seep into our waking moments. For some of us this inner dialogue is so rampant that we could be holding groups by ourselves in our cars!

Where does this internal attack originate? It's an accumulation of stored up negativity that came to us at a young age perhaps from parents, teachers, or even bullies on the playground. Since children don't have clear emotional boundaries, these messages lodge themselves in our limbic brain and we play them back on a regular basis.

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Scientists would call these responses “neuronal firings” in the brain over which we do have some control. However without some sort of discipline, we don’t need our parents or old abusers giving us these hideous assaults, we just give them to ourselves and drown in our own abuse.

There was a time in my life when I felt like I was under a siege of paralyzing criticism and shame. The negative ‘voices’ would occur primarily when I was alone and without any specific plans. To buffer this negativity I made sure that I was busy day and night, throwing myself in a perpetual state of exhaustion! One day after work when I was driving home, the messages became so loud that I felt paralyzed and I knew I had to do something about it. That’s when I started doing what my mentor suggested which is using affirmations. This technique was so life changing for me that I decided to write my own affirmations. Through this process a book was born called *Affirmations for Adult Children of Alcoholics*.

The purpose of affirmation is not to put “frosting on a rotten cake”. The purpose of using this discipline is to feed our brain with different thoughts in order to see the world differently. It’s the antidote to the toxic messages in our limbic brains. However, in order for affirmation to be effective, you must slow down and think about what you’re saying. By doing this you’ll begin to feel the emotion associated with what you’re telling yourself.

Many people tell me that when they start using affirmation it feels awkward, phony and they don’t believe what they’re telling themselves. This response is to be expected and it’s where many of us give up. So don’t be dismayed if, for example, you’re telling yourself that you deserve a loving relationship and the voice in your head chimes in, “Are you kidding? You’ll never find someone to love you.” Again this is a typical response of an old pattern that will change with time.

Most of us have spent years with these messages swirling around in our brains. In fact, I remember one man in InnerPath who began using affirmation for a couple of days. He grew up with physical and emotional abuse and needed something to counteract the barrage of internal self-hating messages he received daily. One morning at the retreat, he raised his hand and asked impatiently, “Rokelle how long does this take to work?” My response was, “How long were you a child?” In other words, we must realize that this storehouse of shame has been accumulating over a lifetime and it takes more than using this tool a couple of times to change the neuronal firings in our limbic brain. However, I can tell you that after a month’s regular use, you can expect to start feeling better, more optimistic and energized. The ‘voices’ get quieter.

Using affirmation changes lives. But in order for this healing to take place we must use patience, persistence, compassion and discipline. These are all the ingredients we would hope for in a loving parent. In essence, by using this tool we’re learning to re-parent ourselves. Not only that, we’re taking charge of our own healing and relieving others of the responsibility to do this for us.

Instead of letting your experience at InnerPath fade, let it be a new year’s resolution for us all that we attend to ourselves with loving kindness and strength by utilizing the powerful tool of affirmation.

Rokelle Lerner is one of the most sought-after speakers and trainers on relationships, women’s issues and addicted family systems. Awards for her work include Esquire’s “Top 100 Women in the US Who Are Changing the Nation.” She has authored the bestselling books, Living in the Comfort Zone: The Gift of Boundaries in Relationships. Affirmations for Adult Children of Alcoholism, Affirmations for the Inner Child and Narcissists and Their Relationships. Rokelle facilitates the InnerPath Retreats for Cottonwood Tucson in Arizona.

Feeling Anger

by Melody Beattie

In recovery, we often discuss anger objectively. Yes, we reason, it’s an emotion we’re all prone to experience. Yes, the goal in recovery is to be free of resentment and anger. Yes, it’s okay to feel angry, we agree. Well, maybe....

Anger is a powerful and sometimes frightening emotion. It’s also a beneficial one if it’s not allowed to harden into resentment or used as a battering ram to punish or abuse people.

Anger is a warning signal. It points to problems. Sometimes, it signals problems we need to solve. Sometimes it points to boundaries we need to set. Sometimes, it’s the final burst of energy before letting go, or acceptance, settles in.

And sometimes, anger just is. It doesn’t have to be justified. It usually can’t be confined to a tidy package. And it need not cause us to stifle ourselves or our energy.

We don’t have to feel guilty whenever we experience anger. We don’t have to feel guilty.

Breathe deeply. We can shamelessly feel our feelings, including anger, and still take responsibility for our behaviors.

InnerPath Retreats

Beginnings & Beyond

3/21-25 • 4/18-22 • May/23-27

Women's Retreat

4/11-15 • 6/20-24

Relationships Retreat

12/1-4

Developing Healthy Families

Monday - Friday
Contact us to schedule

We offer several 4 and 5 day programs for individuals, couples, and families who want to focus on codependency, relationships, communication, grief, loss, trauma, and anger. InnerPath is like a mini-Cottonwood experience where you can come back for a boost to your personal recovery plan. All of our retreats are held at the Cottonwood Nash House, meals and lodging included, and are limited to 8 people. Rokelle Lerner who is a therapist, author, and codependency expert, is our facilitator. Please contact **Jana Zeff** at 520-743-2141 or e-mail her at jzeff@cottonwoodtucson.com for more information about InnerPath.

Sweetwater Adolescent Program

Sweetwater is a 90-day residential program, internationally recognized for the treatment of co-occurring disorders with adolescent females ages 13-17. The *Sweetwater Program* has been designed to help girls and their families recover and make changes necessary to improve the quality of their lives. *Sweetwater* places a strong emphasis on scholastics, offering both structured classroom hours as well as a therapeutic curriculum designed to further the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth of each girl. Cottonwood de Tucson's *Sweetwater Program* is a recipient of the **Woodbury Reports, Inc. "Excellence in Education Award"** having been selected on the basis of our excellent reputation for producing positive and consistent results with at-risk young girls and their families. Additionally, Cottonwood Tucson is a proud member of [National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs \(NATSAP\)](#). If you and your family are struggling with addiction or depression, please contact us, Cottonwood Tucson (see below) and let us help you and your family experience recovery and health.

Phoenix Alumni Meetings

Dear Phoenix Alumni,

I look forward to seeing and encouraging you as you continue your journey in recovery. We meet every first and third Tuesday night of the month at the **ABC Wellness office**, located at **7219 E. Shea Boulevard Scottsdale, AZ 85260**. The meeting time is from **7:00pm until 8:30pm**. The 2011 dates are listed below. Hope to see you there.

2011

Phoenix Alumni Meeting Dates

Mar 1 & 15 • April 5 & 19 • May 3 & 17 • June 7 & 21

July 5 & 19 • Aug 2 & 16 • Sept 6 & 20 • Oct 4 & 18 • Nov 1 & 15 • Dec 6 & 20



Farmington/Durango Alumni Meetings

Dear New Mexico alumni,

Hi alumni, I am looking forward to the March 2011 Alumni meeting. The topic this month is, “**Listening With Your Mind, Body and Heart.**” We have a great group of alumni who are serious about supporting each other. The 2011 meetings will be held at the **First Baptist Church 511 W. Arrington, Farmington, NM. 87401** (west side of building) The meeting time is from **7:00pm until 8:30pm**. I hope to see you there, all are invited.

2011

Farmington Alumni Meeting Dates

March 28 • May 23 • July 25 • Sept 26 • Nov 28

Tucson Alumni Meetings

Dear Tucson Alumni,

Just a reminder, that your Cottonwood Tucson alumni meeting meets every Wednesday from **6pm until 7:30pm at the Cottonwood Campus**. On the first Wednesday of the month you can come early (5pm) and have dinner (\$5 per person). You may also bring one guest. This is a great opportunity to show your sponsor or a family member a small piece of the recovery process here at Cottonwood. We have a presentation or speaker on the first Wednesday of every month.

Please come and support your alumni meeting. The bond Cottonwood alumni have is unique. I'm hoping you will always remember that together we can do what we could never do alone.

Keep Coming Back!

